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ABSTRACT

A description is given of the development of a training model designed to provide assistance to school districts in exploring and implementing programs for dealing with high risk students. The program activities are organized and modeled according to thirteen "quality practices" suggested by exemplary programs in the literature and research on inservice and staff development. These quality practices relate to: (1) the organization of the workshops; (2) the determination of the topic and content of each workshop; and (3) the design and delivery of the workshops. A description is given of each quality practice and how it is modeled in the training program. Fourteen references are included. (JD)

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AN EFFECTIVE INSERVICE TRAINING MODEL FOR "YOUTH IN CRISIS - - REDUCING THE RISKS"

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AN EFFECTIVE INSERVICE TRAINING MODEL FOR " YOUTH IN CRISIS -- REDUCING THE RISKS"

INTRODUCTION

Within The Teachers College at Emporia State University are three separate, but collaborative Centers: The Center for Health Promotion and Wellness, The Jones Institute for Educational Excellence, and The School Counselor Center. The mission of the three Centers is to provide assistance to school districts in exploring and implementing new programs mandated by the state department of education (for example, in the area of human sexuality/AIDS education) or influenced by current research findings and educational reform, as is the case with youth at risk.

Our goal is to share with you how we at the college level have:

1) modelled through the delivery of our services an effective inservice training program for youth at risk and
2) provided direction to school districts in their own inservice programming for youth at risk.

We should emphasize that we work with school districts across the state of Kansas and, as a result, we have to simultaneously consider the needs of both small rural schools and large urban districts.

OVERVIEW

For our purposes, we adopted the definition of students at risk developed by the Phi Delta Kappa national study, i.e., ". . . children who contemplate or attempt suicide . . . children who peddle drugs, mug old people, steal cars, or rob cars, . . . children who engage in sexual activity, use drugs, or drink alcohol, . . . children who are abused - - sexually, physically, or emotionally - - and children who miss school, fail to go to school, fail to achieve in school, or fail at school. . . " (A Study of Students At Risk, Phi Delta Kappa). For the last two years a planning committee has worked to organize two events focused on students at risk. This planning committee is unique in that it's membership consisted of the directors of the three Centers (Health, Promotion, and Welleness, Jones Institute, and School Counselor) the director of Field Services for the Jones Institute, and faculty representatives from the various divisions of the College: counselor education, special education, and curriculum and instruction.

WORKSHOPS

The first event occurred in March, 1989 - a two day workshop at Emporia State University which attracted 140 participants representing 45 school districts (15% of all the districts in the state) mostly from the eastern part of the state. School districts were encouraged to send a team of five people with a typical team including an elementary and secondary teacher, a building administrator, a counselor and a school nurse.

Activities during the first day of the workshop were to create an awareness of the topic of students at risk while the second day focused on preliminary steps to developing district and school action plans for at-risk programs. Participants had the opportunity to interact with each other as well as with national and state experts. Participants also had the opportunity to examine model elementary and secondary programs for suicide prevention, teen pregnancy, alcohol/drug abuse, dropout prevention and stress management.

The second event occurred this fall as another two day workshop, but this was held at a 4-H ranch in the central part of the state to attract school districts from the western part of the state this time. We had 100 participants from 38 school districts (about 13% of all the districts in the state). We did not encourage school districts to send teams to this workshop. The focus of this second workshop was offering answers and solutions to the student at risk issue. During the first day participants explored the at-risk student problem with the help of a national expert and shared their existing school and district student at risk programs. A majority of the second day was spent having participants work with a consultant to develop a thorough action plan for taking back to their districts to implement new programs for at risk students or to refine existing programs for at risk students.

IMPLICATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE INSERVICE TRAINING

In developing and conducting our workshops, we modeled and organized our activities according to thirteen "quality practices" suggested by exemplary programs in the literature and research on inservice and staff development. If we expect practitioners to model quality practices for inservice, then we need to model those same quality practices ourselves. Naturally, we considered our own context, goals, and limitations in determining how best to apply and model quality practices. As a result, our quality practices relate to 1) the organization of the workshops, 2) the determination of the topic and content of each workshop, and 3) the design and delivery of the workshops. What are these quality practices and how have we modeled them?

1. Program development is a collaborative effort of all those involved in the delivery of the program. For us this meant the collaboration of the three Centers and the various respresentatives on the planning committee to plan, design, and deliver two successful workshops. For the participants at the workshops it meant working with colleagues on a school/district team to gain useful knowledge and apply that knowledge in developing an action plan and working with people from other

schools/districts as well as with resource people at the state or national level.

2. Program activities are part of ongoing staff development. The first workshop was designed after an extensive study of existing national, regional, and state programs for at risk students and a review of the research on the topic. As already mentioned, the first workshop was focused at raising awareness and providing information on the topic while the intention of the second workshop was to move participants beyond awareness and information to management of at risk programs. This was accomplished by having the workshop participants examine and develop action plans and programs. Our next effort will be to work individually and colloboratively with districts that have successful programs in place to determine what makes such programs successful and how can other programs also be success. Our staff development goals for working in this area (awareness, information, management, collaboration, and refocusing) relate to the stages of concern model from the CBAM project.

3. Program activities are supported by those involved and those served. For those involved on the planning committee, each member had an active role in both workshops. Members either presented or facilitated a session. Committee members also served as consultants during the action plan sessions. For those served, activities were designed and implemented to help the participants develop an appropriate action plan for at risk programs in their districts.

4. Funding is adequate in order to ensure successful delivery of the program. Even though the three Centers shared the major financial burden for the two workshops and the preminlinary planning activities for such, we also had community support for the first workshop in the form of a grant from a group of businesses. In order to have sufficient funding to cover all the expenses for the workshops, we charged a participant fee. The profits from the second workshop will be used for follow-up work with participating districts, future workshops and/or research projects related to inservice activities on the topic of at risk programs.

5. Decisions about the program are based on program evaluation data. We used both participant evaluation forms from each workshop and feedback from the planning committee as evaluation data. Based on the participant comments from the first workshop, we designed and implemented the second workshop. Basically we included those things

that the participants benefitted most from and eliminated those things that the participants felt were not beneficial. One example would be that a majority of the participants indicated that the sessions during the first workshop needed to be longer and more in depth. In planning the second workshop we kept this suggestion in mind.

6. **Participants of the program are the major providers of the data for evaluation.** Participant evaluation forms provided feedback and asked participants to "rate" the following aspects of each workshop: large and small group presentations, materials, opportunities for participation, opportunities for feedback, overall content of the workshop, pace of the activities, and the facilities.

7. **The content of program activities is derived from participants' needs and strengths.** Because the content of both workshops focused on the development of action plans, school districts wrote action plans that built on their own needs and strengths related to at risk students. The same held true for members of the planning committee. Each member represented a different division of The Teachers College and contributed individual strengths when designing the workshops. For example, the director of the Center for Health, Promotion and Wellness is an expert on stress management for children. Therefore, he presented a session on that topic at the first workshop.

8. **Program activities are sequential, frequent and disbursed.** The first workshop focused on awareness and information. From then, and following the CBAM model, the second workshop progressed to management and collaboration. Within the same year we scheduled both workshops so that the second workshop would provide follow-up to the first. The lapse of time between the workshops provided an opportunity for the participants to go back to their districts and demonstrate and refine their action plans.

9. **The program provides activities for participants to work with and to learn from each other.** For us on the planning committee this meant spending a lot of time together in researching, organizing, delivering and evaluating our workshops. In the process, we have been forced to learn to work with each other and to learn from each other. The participants at the workshops worked with and learned from each other in developing action plans. In March the participants worked mostly with people from their district on action plans, but the participants this fall worked with people from districts other than their own.

10. **The best program presenters are the participants themselves and others are selected because of their levels of expertise.** For the first workshop we selected presenters on the basis of their areas of expertise, i.e., suicide prevention, teen pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse. For the second workshop, we invited school districts to submit a proposal describing their at risk programs. We selected twelve districts to share, what we considered, their most successful programs.

11. **Program activities promote active involvement on the part of the participants.** Activities were scheduled during both workshops for district teams to work together to discuss and plan strategies for implementing an at risk program. Evaluations from the first workshop suggested the need for more time for participants to network with each other. Therefore, more time was scheduled during the second workshop for networking and participant involvement across the district teams as well as within the district teams.

12. **Discussion is an important part and major element of the program.** As a planning committee we engaged in frequent discussion which freuquently bordered on debate. We had a keynote/motivational speaker for both workshops and scheduled time on both programs for the participants to dialogue with the speaker. We also allowed time on both programs for participant-to-participant dialogue. Such discussion at the first workshop was in a formal setting (the sessions) and in an informal setting (break times). At the second workshop more time was deliberately planned to encourage participants to engage in informal discussion. We were at a retreat like setting with no easy access to phones and no televisions. We had planned no organized activities for the evenings. As a result we basically "forced" the participants to dialogue with each other.

13. **Program activities should be individualized to meet the needs, goals, learning styles, and pace of the participants.** At both workshops participants attended small group sessions. At the March workshop the sessions provided information on the identification of at risk students because this topic was new to a majority of the participants. The small group sessions this fall, however, were district presentations of at risk programs because most of the participants already had programs in place. We had action plan development at both workshops. At the first, we walked the participants throught the concept of an action plan, but didn't have them actually complete a plan. During the second workshop, the participants were more sophisticated in action plan development, so we had them write detailed plans.

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